

Green Beret Claims Role In Plot to Oust Sihanouk

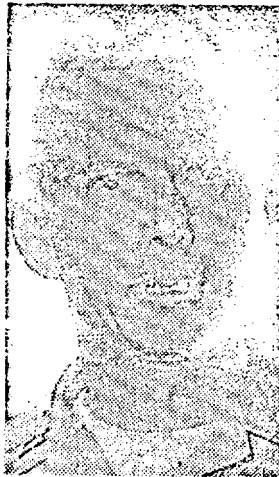
NORFOLK, Va., May 22 (AP)—A Green Beret officer says he took part in a secret mission in 1967 designed to aid in the overthrow of Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot reported in its Sunday editions.

Capt. John McCarthy, 28, who said today he will resign his Army commission in August, said the clandestine operation in Cambodia was directed from South Vietnam by the Central Intelligence Agency, the paper reported.

The mission was known as "Operation Cherry," the paper said, and involved McCarthy, working under cover, and members of the Khmer Serai, a society of Cambodians working to oust Sihanouk.

The Pentagon today denied any knowledge of "Operation Cherry."

McCarthy served two years in a federal prison for the murder of a Cambodian mercenary before his conviction was overturned by a military court of appeals. Reached at home in Arizona Saturday, he



CAPT. JOHN MCCARTHY JR.
... alleges CIA operation

refused to elaborate on the newspaper article.

Asked if it was far-fetched to say Cambodians may have been hired for "Operation Cherry," McCarthy said, "No." But he refused further comment. He is now stationed at Ft. Huachuca, Ariz.

Sihanouk was ousted by a Cambodian army coup in March 1970, about a month before American South Vietnamese troops entered the country to hit Communist supply bases.

The U.S. government has consistently denied having anything to do with Sihanouk's downfall.

McCarthy said he is leaving the Army because the government had suppressed defense evidence at his trial.

"I have come to the conclusion that loyalty, silence and faith were to no avail," the Virginian-Pilot quoted him as saying.